

What is claimed is:

1. A method using a computer system, which includes a data mart with internal data  
5 from one or more data sources and external data from one or more data sources, and a plurality of software modules, the method automatically invoking one or more software modules as a response to one or more internal events and/or external events that affect or potentially affect business operations associated with procurement, sourcing, and/or strategic sourcing of one or more items in an enterprise, and comprising the steps of:

10 extracting, via one or more software modules, first information regarding one or more internal events from one or more data sources and/or one or more external events from one or more data sources, wherein the first information is potentially relevant to the business operations associated with the procurement, sourcing, and/or strategic sourcing of the one or more items in the enterprise;

15 loading the first information into the datamart;

determining, via one or more software modules, relevance of the first information to the business operations associated with the procurement, sourcing, and/or strategic sourcing of the one or more items in the enterprise;

20 analyzing, via one or more software modules, an impact of the first information on the business operations associated with the procurement, sourcing, and/or strategic sourcing of the one or more items in the enterprise;

invoking one or more software modules to provide actions to resolve the impact of the first information on the business operations in the enterprise regarding the procurement, sourcing, and/or strategic sourcing of the one or more items; and

25 triggering automatically one or more software modules to alert the user that one or more software modules are acting to resolve the impact of the first information on the business operations in the enterprise regarding the procurement, sourcing, and/or strategic sourcing of the one or more items.

2. The method of claim 1, wherein the external data is selected from the one or more data sources, consisting of suppliers, vendors, product databases, electronic catalogs, online marketplaces, subscription sources, and/or news sources.

3. The method of claim 2, wherein the external data from the suppliers consists of one or more of the following: product catalog data, prices, quantity, availability, product specifications, delivery date, supplier location, shipping locations, total net landed cost, current sales offers, past sales offers, and/or lead time.

4. The method of claim 2, wherein the external data from the vendors consists of one or more of the following: product catalog data, prices, quantity, availability, product specifications, delivery date, vendor location, shipping locations, total net landed cost, current sales offers, past sales offers, and/or lead time.

5. The method of claim 2, wherein the external data from the product databases consists of one or more of the following: product catalog data, product name, product description, product specifications, design schematics, manufacturers, manufacturer information, manufacturer specifications, part numbers, End of Life (EOL) information, class of equivalent parts, class of upgrade parts, standard industry categories, classes of parts that are equivalent to said component for certain specified applications, and/or links to manufacturer's data-sheets.

6. The method of claim 2, wherein the external data from the electronic catalogs consists of one or more of the following: product specifications, manufacturer information, manufacturers of equivalent components, supplier information, suppliers of equivalent components, prices, current sales offers, past sales offers, availability, EOL information, part numbers, class of equivalent parts, class of upgrade parts, standard industry categories, and/or classes of parts that are equivalent to said component for certain specified applications.

7. The method of claim 2, wherein the online marketplace includes private exchange, public exchanges, third party exchanges, consortia-led exchanges, information hubs, and/or electronic auctions.

8. The method of claim 7, wherein the external data from the online marketplaces consists of one or more of the following: product specifications, manufacturer information, manufacturers of equivalent components, supplier information, suppliers of equivalent

components, prices, current sales offers, past sales offers, availability, EOL information, part numbers, class of equivalent parts, class of upgrade parts, standard industry categories, and/or classes of parts that are equivalent to said component for certain specified applications.

9. The method of claim 2, wherein the external data from the subscription sources consists of one or more of the following: product specifications, manufacturer information, manufacturers of equivalent components, supplier information, suppliers of equivalent components, upgrades of components, downgrades of components, prices, current sales offers, past sales offers, availability, total net landed cost, EOL information, part numbers, class of equivalent parts, class of upgrade parts, standard industry categories, classes of parts that are equivalent to said component for certain specified applications, news reports, market reports, industry bulletins, daily news broadcasts, emergency broadcasts, trade journals, product reviews, supplier ratings, product launch information, delivery dates, supplier locations, shipping locations, weather reports, historical weather data, geographical reports, transportation reports, and/or traffic reports.

10. The method of claim 2, wherein the external data from the news sources consists of one or more of the following: product specifications, manufacturer information, manufacturers of equivalent components, supplier information, suppliers of equivalent components, upgrades of components, downgrades of components, prices, current sales offers, past sales offers, availability, total net landed cost, EOL information, part numbers, class of equivalent parts, class of upgrade parts, standard industry categories, classes of parts that are equivalent to said component for certain specified applications, news reports, market reports, industry bulletins, daily news broadcasts, emergency broadcasts, trade journals, product reviews, supplier ratings, product launch information, delivery dates, supplier locations, shipping locations, weather reports, historical weather data, geographical reports, transportation reports, and/or traffic reports.

11. The method of claim 1, wherein the internal data is selected the from one or more data sources, consisting of suppliers' databases, contracts' databases, product quality databases, internal parts databases, data marts, ERP systems, SCM systems, MRP systems, and/or CRM systems.

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12. The method of claim 11, wherein the internal data from the suppliers' databases consists of one or more of the following: product catalog data, product specifications, part numbers, prices, quantity, total net landed cost, delivery dates, lead time, PO histories, manufacturer information, manufacturers of equivalent parts, supplier information, suppliers of equivalent parts, current sales offers, past sales offers, availability, class of equivalent parts, class of upgrade parts, standard industry categories, classes of parts that are equivalent to said component for certain specified applications, client inventories, distributor data, retailer data, transportation schedules, distribution schedules, warehouse locations, supply inventories, supply forecasts, inventory targets, contract terms, contract prices, sales targets, fill rates, just-in-time (JIT) reports, supplier ratings, Vendor Managed Inventory (VMI) data, market data, industry data, product reviews, product launch information, supplier locations, and/or shipping locations.

13. The method of claim 11, wherein the internal data from the contracts' databases consists of one or more of the following: product specifications, part numbers, prices, custom pricing, total net landed cost, delivery schedules, allocation terms, manufacturer information, contract terms, contract amendments, contract availability, company policies, and/or target number of units.

14. The method of claim 11, wherein the internal data from the product quality databases consists of one or more of the following: product specifications, part numbers, prices, total cost, quality metrics, internal reports, product change requests, warranty information, manufacturer information, manufacturer of equivalent parts, measurement standards, supplier information, suppliers of equivalent parts, availability, class of equivalent parts, class of upgrade parts, class of downgrade parts, standard industry categories, classes of parts that are equivalent to said component for certain specified applications, client inventories, and/or product reviews.

15. The method of claim 11, wherein the internal data from the internal parts databases consists of one or more of the following: parts catalogs, part numbers, product specifications, prices, total net landed cost, availability, manufacturer information, manufacturers of equivalent parts, supplier information, suppliers of equivalent parts, class of equivalent parts, class of upgrade parts, class of downgrade parts, classes of parts that are equivalent to said component for certain specified applications, spare parts inventories, supply inventories, supply

forecasts, inventory targets, fill rates, just-in-time (JIT) reports, Vendor Managed Inventory (VMI) data, product reviews, supplier ratings, manufacturer ratings, and/or contract terms.

16. The method of claim 11, wherein the internal data from the data marts consists of one or more of the following: product specifications, manufacturer information, manufacturers of equivalent components, supplier information, suppliers of equivalent components, upgrades of components, downgrades of components, prices, current sales offers, past sales offers, availability, total net landed cost, EOL information, part numbers, part catalogs, class of equivalent parts, class of upgrade parts, class of downgrade parts, standard industry categories, classes of parts that are equivalent to said component for certain specified applications, news reports, market reports, industry bulletins, daily news broadcasts, emergency broadcasts, trade journals, product reviews, supplier ratings, product launch information, delivery dates, supplier locations, shipping locations, weather reports, historical weather data, geographical reports, transportation reports, traffic reports, contract prices, sales targets, fill rates, JIT reports, company policies, manufacturer directories, retailer directories, client account information, spare parts inventories, supply inventories, supply forecasts, inventory targets, fill rates, JIT reports, VMI data, product reviews, supplier ratings, manufacturer ratings, contract terms, contract adjustments, and/or customized data based on the integration of internal data and external data.

17. The method of claim 11, wherein the internal data from the ERP systems consists of one or more of the following: costs, assets, capital equipment data, PO's, demand forecasts, ownership status, purchasing records, stockroom inventories, order processing data, ledgers, product information, manufacturer information, distributor information, retailer information, supply inventories, supply forecast, inventory targets, contract terms, contract prices, sales targets, fill rates, JIT reports, part numbers, supplier ratings, VMI data, stockroom inventories, and/or ERP planning data.

18. The method of claim 11, wherein the internal data from the SCM systems consists of one or more of the following: on-hand inventories, order processing, event management, costs, assets, data about transport networks, VMI data, key performance indicators, material flows, inventory control reports, new product launches, new customer segments, facility locations, warehouse locations, suppliers, manufacturers, distributors, forecasts, promotions, product

specifications, product life cycles, product obsolescence, product profiles, revenues, sales objectives, supplier selection criteria, sourcing, ordering, invoicing, delivery schedules, bid prices, ask prices, service levels, production schedules, material and constraints capacity, BOMs, manufacturing data, collaboration data, inventory levels, allocation and planning data, confirmation dates, product allocation data, product demand data, due dates, carriers, tariffs, transportation data, shipping routes, handling capacities, shipping schedules, prices, equipment status, delivery logs, event tracking data, weather, purchase history, current units in inventory, inventory logs, current days of supply, demand forecasts, inventory targets, percent deviation from target, location breakdowns, ownership status, and/or SCM planning data.

19. The method of claim 11, wherein the internal data from the MRP systems consists of one or more of the following: PO's, work orders, BOMs, routing and resource data, project structures, asset structures, claims management data, order changes, engineering changes, production schedules, production orders, product and asset life cycles, costs, margins, revenues, status reports, project plans, product specifications, parts, maintenance schedules, product performance data, upgrade data, refurbishment data, backlog data, hazardous materials management information, MSDS datasheets, product safety information, and/or MRP planning data.

20. The method of claim 11, wherein the internal data from the CRM systems consists of one or more of the following: profits, billing, contracts, sales activity data, contact management data, customer segmentation data, product and services profiles, marketing plans, POs, order tracking data, order acquisition data, customer address directories, customer preferences, customer site information, vital customer data, customer service management data, field service data, order life cycle process, and/or CRM planning data.

21. The method of claim 11, wherein the internal data comes from non-electronic sources.

22. The method of claim 1, wherein the first information is selected from the one or more data sources, consisting of suppliers, vendors, product databases, electronic catalogs, online marketplaces, subscription sources, news sources, suppliers' databases, contracts' databases,

product quality databases, internal parts databases, data marts, ERP systems, SCM systems, MRP systems, and/or CRM systems.

23. The method of claim 22, wherein the first information from the suppliers consists of one or more of the following: product catalog data, prices, quantity, availability, product specifications, delivery date, supplier location, shipping locations, total net landed cost, current sales offers, past sales offers, and/or lead time.

24. The method of claim 22, wherein the first information from the vendors consists of one or more of the following: product catalog data, prices, quantity, availability, product specifications, delivery date, vendor location, shipping locations, total net landed cost, current sales offers, past sales offers, and/or lead time.

26. The method of claim 22, wherein the first information from the product databases consists of one or more of the following: product catalog data, product name, product description, product specifications, design schematics, manufacturers, manufacturer information, manufacturer specifications, part numbers, End of Life (EOL) information, class of equivalent parts, class of upgrade parts, standard industry categories, classes of parts that are equivalent to said component for certain specified applications, and/or links to manufacturer's data-sheets.

27. The method of claim 22, wherein the first information from the electronic catalogs consists of one or more of the following: product specifications, manufacturer information, manufacturers of equivalent components, supplier information, suppliers of equivalent components, prices, current sales offers, past sales offers, availability, EOL information, part numbers, class of equivalent parts, class of upgrade parts, standard industry categories, and/or classes of parts that are equivalent to said component for certain specified applications.

28. The method of claim 27, wherein the online marketplace includes private exchange, public exchanges, third party exchanges, consortia-led exchanges, information hubs, and/or electronic auctions.

29. The method of claim 28, wherein the first information from the online marketplaces consists of one or more of the following: product specifications, manufacturer information, manufacturers of equivalent components, supplier information, suppliers of equivalent components, prices, current sales offers, past sales offers, availability, EOL

information, part numbers, class of equivalent parts, class of upgrade parts, standard industry categories, and/or classes of parts that are equivalent to said component for certain specified applications.

30. The method of claim 22, wherein the first information from the subscription  
5 sources consists of one or more of the following: product specifications, manufacturer information, manufacturers of equivalent components, supplier information, suppliers of equivalent components, upgrades of components, downgrades of components, prices, current sales offers, past sales offers, availability, total net landed cost, EOL information, part numbers, class of equivalent parts, class of upgrade parts, standard industry categories, classes of parts that  
10 are equivalent to said component for certain specified applications, news reports, market reports, industry bulletins, daily news broadcasts, emergency broadcasts, trade journals, product reviews, supplier ratings, product launch information, delivery dates, supplier locations, shipping locations, weather reports, historical weather data, geographical reports, transportation reports, and/or traffic reports.

31. The method of claim 22, wherein the first information from the news sources  
15 consists of one or more of the following: product specifications, manufacturer information, manufacturers of equivalent components, supplier information, suppliers of equivalent components, upgrades of components, downgrades of components, prices, current sales offers, past sales offers, availability, total net landed cost, EOL information, part numbers, class of  
20 equivalent parts, class of upgrade parts, standard industry categories, classes of parts that are equivalent to said component for certain specified applications, news reports, market reports, industry bulletins, daily news broadcasts, emergency broadcasts, trade journals, product reviews, supplier ratings, product launch information, delivery dates, supplier locations, shipping locations, weather reports, historical weather data, geographical reports, transportation reports,  
25 and/or traffic reports.

32. The method of claim 22, wherein the first information from the suppliers' databases consists of one or more of the following: product catalog data, product specifications, part numbers, prices, quantity, total net landed cost, delivery dates, lead time, PO histories, manufacturer information, manufacturers of equivalent parts, supplier information, suppliers of



equivalent parts, current sales offers, past sales offers, availability, class of equivalent parts, class of upgrade parts, standard industry categories, classes of parts that are equivalent to said component for certain specified applications, client inventories, distributor data, retailer data, transportation schedules, distribution schedules, warehouse locations, supply inventories, supply forecasts, inventory targets, contract terms, contract prices, sales targets, fill rates, just-in-time (JIT) reports, supplier ratings, Vendor Managed Inventory (VMI) data, market data, industry data, product reviews, product launch information, supplier locations, and/or shipping locations.

33. The method of claim 22, wherein the first information from the contracts' databases consists of one or more of the following: product specifications, part numbers, prices, custom pricing, total net landed cost, delivery schedules, allocation terms, manufacturer information, contract terms, contract amendments, contract availability, company policies, and/or target number of units.

34. The method of claim 22, wherein the first information from the product quality databases consists of one or more of the following: product specifications, part numbers, prices, total cost, quality metrics, internal reports, product change requests, warranty information, manufacturer information, manufacturer of equivalent parts, measurement standards, supplier information, suppliers of equivalent parts, availability, class of equivalent parts, class of upgrade parts, class of downgrade parts, standard industry categories, classes of parts that are equivalent to said component for certain specified applications, client inventories, and/or product reviews.

35. The method of claim 22, wherein the first information from the internal parts databases consists of one or more of the following: parts catalogs, part numbers, product specifications, prices, total net landed cost, availability, manufacturer information, manufacturers of equivalent parts, supplier information, suppliers of equivalent parts, class of equivalent parts, class of upgrade parts, class of downgrade parts, classes of parts that are equivalent to said component for certain specified applications, spare parts inventories, supply inventories, supply forecasts, inventory targets, fill rates, just-in-time (JIT) reports, Vendor Managed Inventory (VMI) data, product reviews, supplier ratings, manufacturer ratings, and/or contract terms.

36. The method of claim 22, wherein the first information from the data marts consists of one or more of the following: product specifications, manufacturer information,

manufacturers of equivalent components, supplier information, suppliers of equivalent components, upgrades of components, downgrades of components, prices, current sales offers, past sales offers, availability, total net landed cost, EOL information, part numbers, part catalogs, class of equivalent parts, class of upgrade parts, class of downgrade parts, standard industry categories, classes of parts that are equivalent to said component for certain specified applications, news reports, market reports, industry bulletins, daily news broadcasts, emergency broadcasts, trade journals, product reviews, supplier ratings, product launch information, delivery dates, supplier locations, shipping locations, weather reports, historical weather data, geographical reports, transportation reports, traffic reports, contract prices, sales targets, fill rates, JIT reports, company policies, manufacturer directories, retailer directories, client account information, spare parts inventories, supply inventories, supply forecasts, inventory targets, fill rates, JIT reports, VMI data, product reviews, supplier ratings, manufacturer ratings, contract terms, contract adjustments, and/or customized data based on the integration of first information and second information.

37. The method of claim 22, wherein the first information from the ERP systems consists of one or more of the following: costs, assets, capital equipment data, PO's, demand forecasts, ownership status, purchasing records, stockroom inventories, order processing data, ledgers, product information, manufacturer information, distributor information, retailer information, supply inventories, supply forecast, inventory targets, contract terms, contract prices, sales targets, fill rates, JIT reports, part numbers, supplier ratings, VMI data, stockroom inventories, and/or ERP planning data.

38. The method of claim 22, wherein the first information from the SCM systems consists of one or more of the following: on-hand inventories, order processing, event management, costs, assets, data about transport networks, VMI data, key performance indicators, material flows, inventory control reports, new product launches, new customer segments, facility locations, warehouse locations, suppliers, manufacturers, distributors, forecasts, promotions, product specifications, product life cycles, product obsolescence, product profiles, revenues, sales objectives, supplier selection criteria, sourcing, ordering, invoicing, delivery schedules, bid prices, ask prices, service levels, production schedules, material and constraints capacity, BOMs, manufacturing data, collaboration data, inventory levels, allocation and planning data,

confirmation dates, product allocation data, product demand data, due dates, carriers, tariffs, transportation data, shipping routes, handling capacities, shipping schedules, prices, equipment status, delivery logs, event tracking data, weather, purchase history, current units in inventory, inventory logs, current days of supply, demand forecasts, inventory targets, percent deviation  
5 from target, location breakdowns, ownership status, and/or SCM planning data.

39. The method of claim 22, wherein the first information from the MRP systems consists of one or more of the following: PO's, work orders, BOMs, routing and resource data, project structures, asset structures, claims management data, order changes, engineering changes, production schedules, production orders, product and asset life cycles, costs, margins, revenues,  
10 status reports, project plans, product specifications, parts, maintenance schedules, product performance data, upgrade data, refurbishment data, backlog data, hazardous materials management information, MSDS datasheets, product safety information, and/or MRP planning data.

40. The method of claim 22, wherein the first information from the CRM systems consists of one or more of the following: profits, billing, contracts, sales activity data, contact management data, customer segmentation data, product and services profiles, marketing plans, POs, order tracking data, order acquisition data, customer address directories, customer preferences, customer site information, vital customer data, customer service management data, field service data, order life cycle process, and/or CRM planning data.

41. The method of 1, wherein the first information consists of messages and/or other types of communication data from e-mails, pagers, voice mail, electronic messaging systems, answering machine messages, telephone calls, web page links, web page data, teleconferencing messages, and/or infrared beamed messages.

42. The method of claim 1, wherein the internal data and the external data are  
25 extracted in a plurality of formats requiring transformation.

43. The method of claim 42, wherein the plurality of formats of the external data consists of one or more of the following: XML, Java, flat files, CSV, and/or spreadsheets.

44. The method of claim 42, wherein the plurality of formats of the internal data consists of one or more of the following: XML and/or Java.

45. The method of claim 1, wherein the first information are extracted in a plurality of formats requiring transformation.

46. The method of claim 45, wherein the plurality of formats of the first information consist of one or more of the following: XML, XSL, Java, flat files, CSV, spreadsheets, standard report formats, and/or web-based formats.

47. The method of claim 1, wherein the internal data can be pre-determined according to a plurality of user-specified inputs.

48. The method of claim 1, wherein the one or more of the software modules automatically incorporate the internal data and the external data and the first information into the next invocation of one or more software modules.

49. The method of claim 48, wherein the first information is the result of system input.

50. The method of claim 1, wherein the step of invoking the one or more software modules includes automatically invoking with partial or complete instantiation, wherein the partial or complete instantiation specifies all or part of the user input for performing a task with a software module.

51. The method of claim 50, wherein the invoking with the partial or complete instantiation are the result of one or more events that the computer system determines merit invocation of the one or more software modules.

52. The method of claim 50, wherein the invoking with the partial or complete instantiation is accompanied by a representation of an alert or plurality of alerts that caused the module to be invoked.

53. The method of claim 50, wherein the invoking with the partial or complete instantiation is accompanied by a representation of the steps that caused the module to be invoked.

54. The method of claim 1, wherein the step of invoking the one or more software modules occurs with one or more degrees of instantiation, wherein the one or more degrees of instantiation are customized according to user specifications.



business operations associated with procurement, sourcing, and/or strategic sourcing of one or more items in an enterprise, and comprising the steps of:

extracting, via one or more software modules, first information regarding one or more internal events from one or more data sources and/or one or more external events from one or more data sources, wherein the first information is potentially relevant to the business operations associated with the procurement, sourcing, and/or strategic sourcing of the one or more items in the enterprise;

loading the first information into the datamart;

determining, via one or more software modules, relevance of the first information to the business operations associated with the procurement, sourcing, and/or strategic sourcing of the one or more items in the enterprise;

analyzing, via one or more software modules, an impact of the first information on the business operations associated with the procurement, sourcing, and/or strategic sourcing of the one or more items in the enterprise;

triggering automatically one or more software modules to alert the user that one or more software modules are acting to resolve the impact of the first information on the business operations in the enterprise regarding the procurement, sourcing, and/or strategic sourcing of the one or more items; and

invoking one or more software modules to provide actions to resolve the impact of the first information on the business operations in the enterprise regarding the procurement, sourcing, and/or strategic sourcing of the one or more items.

66. The method of claim 65, wherein the external data is selected from the one or more data sources, consisting of suppliers, vendors, product databases, electronic catalogs, online marketplaces, subscription sources, and/or news sources.

67. The method of claim 66, wherein the external data from the suppliers consists of one or more of the following: product catalog data, prices, quantity, availability, product specifications, delivery date, supplier location, shipping locations, total net landed cost, current sales offers, past sales offers, and/or lead time.

68. The method of claim 66, wherein the external data from the vendors consists of one or more of the following: product catalog data, prices, quantity, availability, product specifications, delivery date, vendor location, shipping locations, total net landed cost, current sales offers, past sales offers, and/or lead time.

5 69. The method of claim 66, wherein the external data from the product databases consists of one or more of the following: product catalog data, product name, product description, product specifications, design schematics, manufacturers, manufacturer information, manufacturer specifications, part numbers, End of Life (EOL) information, class of equivalent parts, class of upgrade parts, standard industry categories, classes of parts that are equivalent to  
10 said component for certain specified applications, and/or links to manufacturer's data-sheets.

70. The method of claim 66, wherein the external data from the electronic catalogs consists of one or more of the following: product specifications, manufacturer information, manufacturers of equivalent components, supplier information, suppliers of equivalent components, prices, current sales offers, past sales offers, availability, EOL information, part numbers, class of equivalent parts, class of upgrade parts, standard industry categories, and/or  
15 classes of parts that are equivalent to said component for certain specified applications.

71. The method of claim 66, wherein the online marketplace includes private exchange, public exchanges, third party exchanges, consortia-led exchanges, information hubs, and/or electronic auctions.

20 72. The method of claim 71, wherein the external data from the online marketplaces consists of one or more of the following: product specifications, manufacturer information, manufacturers of equivalent components, supplier information, suppliers of equivalent components, prices, current sales offers, past sales offers, availability, EOL information, part numbers, class of equivalent parts, class of upgrade parts, standard industry categories, and/or  
25 classes of parts that are equivalent to said component for certain specified applications.

73. The method of claim 66, wherein the external data from the subscription sources consists of one or more of the following: product specifications, manufacturer information, manufacturers of equivalent components, supplier information, suppliers of equivalent components, upgrades of components, downgrades of components, prices, current sales offers,

past sales offers, availability, total net landed cost, EOL information, part numbers, class of equivalent parts, class of upgrade parts, standard industry categories, classes of parts that are equivalent to said component for certain specified applications, news reports, market reports, industry bulletins, daily news broadcasts, emergency broadcasts, trade journals, product reviews, supplier ratings, product launch information, delivery dates, supplier locations, shipping locations, weather reports, historical weather data, geographical reports, transportation reports, and/or traffic reports.

74. The method of claim 66, wherein the external data from the news sources consists of one or more of the following: product specifications, manufacturer information, manufacturers of equivalent components, supplier information, suppliers of equivalent components, upgrades of components, downgrades of components, prices, current sales offers, past sales offers, availability, total net landed cost, EOL information, part numbers, class of equivalent parts, class of upgrade parts, standard industry categories, classes of parts that are equivalent to said component for certain specified applications, news reports, market reports, industry bulletins, daily news broadcasts, emergency broadcasts, trade journals, product reviews, supplier ratings, product launch information, delivery dates, supplier locations, shipping locations, weather reports, historical weather data, geographical reports, transportation reports, and/or traffic reports.

75. The method of claim 65, wherein the internal data is selected from the one or more data sources, consisting of suppliers' databases, contracts' databases, product quality databases, internal parts databases, data marts, ERP systems, SCM systems, MRP systems, and/or CRM systems.

76. The method of claim 75, wherein the internal data from the suppliers' databases consists of one or more of the following: product catalog data, product specifications, part numbers, prices, quantity, total net landed cost, delivery dates, lead time, PO histories, manufacturer information, manufacturers of equivalent parts, supplier information, suppliers of equivalent parts, current sales offers, past sales offers, availability, class of equivalent parts, class of upgrade parts, standard industry categories, classes of parts that are equivalent to said component for certain specified applications, client inventories, distributor data, retailer data,



transportation schedules, distribution schedules, warehouse locations, supply inventories, supply forecasts, inventory targets, contract terms, contract prices, sales targets, fill rates, just-in-time (JIT) reports, supplier ratings, Vendor Managed Inventory (VMI) data, market data, industry data, product reviews, product launch information, supplier locations, and/or shipping locations.

5           77.     The method of claim 75, wherein the internal data from the contracts' databases consists of one or more of the following: product specifications, part numbers, prices, custom pricing, total net landed cost, delivery schedules, allocation terms, manufacturer information, contract terms, contract amendments, contract availability, company policies, and/or target number of units.

10           78.     The method of claim 75, wherein the internal data from the product quality databases consists of one or more of the following: product specifications, part numbers, prices, total cost, quality metrics, internal reports, product change requests, warranty information, manufacturer information, manufacturer of equivalent parts, measurement standards, supplier information, suppliers of equivalent parts, availability, class of equivalent parts, class of upgrade parts, class of downgrade parts, standard industry categories, classes of parts that are equivalent to said component for certain specified applications, client inventories, and/or product reviews.

15           79.     The method of claim 75, wherein the internal data from the internal parts databases consists of one or more of the following: parts catalogs, part numbers, product specifications, prices, total net landed cost, availability, manufacturer information, manufacturers of equivalent parts, supplier information, suppliers of equivalent parts, class of equivalent parts, class of upgrade parts, class of downgrade parts, classes of parts that are equivalent to said component for certain specified applications, spare parts inventories, supply inventories, supply forecasts, inventory targets, fill rates, just-in-time (JIT) reports, Vendor Managed Inventory (VMI) data, product reviews, supplier ratings, manufacturer ratings, and/or contract terms.

20           80.     The method of claim 75, wherein the internal data from the data marts consists of one or more of the following: product specifications, manufacturer information, manufacturers of equivalent components, supplier information, suppliers of equivalent components, upgrades of components, downgrades of components, prices, current sales offers, past sales offers, availability, total net landed cost, EOL information, part numbers, part catalogs, class of

equivalent parts, class of upgrade parts, class of downgrade parts, standard industry categories, classes of parts that are equivalent to said component for certain specified applications, news reports, market reports, industry bulletins, daily news broadcasts, emergency broadcasts, trade journals, product reviews, supplier ratings, product launch information, delivery dates, supplier locations, shipping locations, weather reports, historical weather data, geographical reports, transportation reports, traffic reports, contract prices, sales targets, fill rates, JIT reports, company policies, manufacturer directories, retailer directories, client account information, spare parts inventories, supply inventories, supply forecasts, inventory targets, fill rates, JIT reports, VMI data, product reviews, supplier ratings, manufacturer ratings, contract terms, contract adjustments, and/or customized data based on the integration of internal data and external data.

81. The method of claim 75, wherein the internal data from the ERP systems consists of one or more of the following: costs, assets, capital equipment data, PO's, demand forecasts, ownership status, purchasing records, stockroom inventories, order processing data, ledgers, product information, manufacturer information, distributor information, retailer information, supply inventories, supply forecast, inventory targets, contract terms, contract prices, sales targets, fill rates, JIT reports, part numbers, supplier ratings, VMI data, stockroom inventories, and/or ERP planning data.

82. The method of claim 75, wherein the internal data from the SCM systems consists of one or more of the following: on-hand inventories, order processing, event management, costs, assets, data about transport networks, VMI data, key performance indicators, material flows, inventory control reports, new product launches, new customer segments, facility locations, warehouse locations, suppliers, manufacturers, distributors, forecasts, promotions, product specifications, product life cycles, product obsolescence, product profiles, revenues, sales objectives, supplier selection criteria, sourcing, ordering, invoicing, delivery schedules, bid prices, ask prices, service levels, production schedules, material and constraints capacity, BOMs, manufacturing data, collaboration data, inventory levels, allocation and planning data, confirmation dates, product allocation data, product demand data, due dates, carriers, tariffs, transportation data, shipping routes, handling capacities, shipping schedules, prices, equipment status, delivery logs, event tracking data, weather, purchase history, current units in inventory,

inventory logs, current days of supply, demand forecasts, inventory targets, percent deviation from target, location breakdowns, ownership status, and/or SCM planning data.

83. The method of claim 75, wherein the internal data from the MRP systems consists of one or more of the following: PO's, work orders, BOMs, routing and resource data, project structures, asset structures, claims management data, order changes, engineering changes, production schedules, production orders, product and asset life cycles, costs, margins, revenues, status reports, project plans, product specifications, parts, maintenance schedules, product performance data, upgrade data, refurbishment data, backlog data, hazardous materials management information, MSDS datasheets, product safety information, and/or MRP planning data.

84. The method of claim 75, wherein the internal data from the CRM systems consists of one or more of the following: profits, billing, contracts, sales activity data, contact management data, customer segmentation data, product and services profiles, marketing plans, POs, order tracking data, order acquisition data, customer address directories, customer preferences, customer site information, vital customer data, customer service management data, field service data, order life cycle process, and/or CRM planning data.

85. The method of claim 75, wherein the internal data comes from non-electronic sources.

86. The method of claim 65, wherein the first information is selected from the one or more data sources, consisting of suppliers, vendors, product databases, electronic catalogs, online marketplaces, subscription sources, news sources, suppliers' databases, contracts' databases, product quality databases, internal parts databases, data marts, ERP systems, SCM systems, MRP systems, and/or CRM systems.

87. The method of claim 86, wherein the first information from the suppliers consists of one or more of the following: product catalog data, prices, quantity, availability, product specifications, delivery date, supplier location, shipping locations, total net landed cost, current sales offers, past sales offers, and/or lead time.

88. The method of claim 86, wherein the first information from the vendors consists of one or more of the following: product catalog data, prices, quantity, availability, product

specifications, delivery date, vendor location, shipping locations, total net landed cost, current sales offers, past sales offers, and/or lead time.

89. The method of claim 86, wherein the first information from the product databases consists of one or more of the following: product catalog data, product name, product  
5 description, product specifications, design schematics, manufacturers, manufacturer information, manufacturer specifications, part numbers, End of Life (EOL) information, class of equivalent parts, class of upgrade parts, standard industry categories, classes of parts that are equivalent to said component for certain specified applications, and/or links to manufacturer's data-sheets.

90. The method of claim 86, wherein the first information from the electronic catalogs  
10 consists of one or more of the following: product specifications, manufacturer information, manufacturers of equivalent components, supplier information, suppliers of equivalent components, prices, current sales offers, past sales offers, availability, EOL information, part numbers, class of equivalent parts, class of upgrade parts, standard industry categories, and/or classes of parts that are equivalent to said component for certain specified applications.

91. The method of claim 90, wherein the online marketplace includes private  
15 exchange, public exchanges, third party exchanges, consortia-led exchanges, information hubs, and/or electronic auctions.

92. The method of claim 91, wherein the first information from the online  
20 marketplaces consists of one or more of the following: product specifications, manufacturer information, manufacturers of equivalent components, supplier information, suppliers of equivalent components, prices, current sales offers, past sales offers, availability, EOL information, part numbers, class of equivalent parts, class of upgrade parts, standard industry categories, and/or classes of parts that are equivalent to said component for certain specified applications.

93. The method of claim 86, wherein the first information from the subscription  
25 sources consists of one or more of the following: product specifications, manufacturer information, manufacturers of equivalent components, supplier information, suppliers of equivalent components, upgrades of components, downgrades of components, prices, current sales offers, past sales offers, availability, total net landed cost, EOL information, part numbers,

class of equivalent parts, class of upgrade parts, standard industry categories, classes of parts that are equivalent to said component for certain specified applications, news reports, market reports, industry bulletins, daily news broadcasts, emergency broadcasts, trade journals, product reviews, supplier ratings, product launch information, delivery dates, supplier locations, shipping locations, weather reports, historical weather data, geographical reports, transportation reports, and/or traffic reports.

94. The method of claim 86, wherein the first information from the news sources consists of one or more of the following: product specifications, manufacturer information, manufacturers of equivalent components, supplier information, suppliers of equivalent components, upgrades of components, downgrades of components, prices, current sales offers, past sales offers, availability, total net landed cost, EOL information, part numbers, class of equivalent parts, class of upgrade parts, standard industry categories, classes of parts that are equivalent to said component for certain specified applications, news reports, market reports, industry bulletins, daily news broadcasts, emergency broadcasts, trade journals, product reviews, supplier ratings, product launch information, delivery dates, supplier locations, shipping locations, weather reports, historical weather data, geographical reports, transportation reports, and/or traffic reports.

95. The method of claim 86, wherein the first information from the suppliers' databases consists of one or more of the following: product catalog data, product specifications, part numbers, prices, quantity, total net landed cost, delivery dates, lead time, PO histories, manufacturer information, manufacturers of equivalent parts, supplier information, suppliers of equivalent parts, current sales offers, past sales offers, availability, class of equivalent parts, class of upgrade parts, standard industry categories, classes of parts that are equivalent to said component for certain specified applications, client inventories, distributor data, retailer data, transportation schedules, distribution schedules, warehouse locations, supply inventories, supply forecasts, inventory targets, contract terms, contract prices, sales targets, fill rates, just-in-time (JIT) reports, supplier ratings, Vendor Managed Inventory (VMI) data, market data, industry data, product reviews, product launch information, supplier locations, and/or shipping locations.

96. The method of claim 86, wherein the first information from the contracts' databases consists of one or more of the following: product specifications, part numbers, prices, custom pricing, total net landed cost, delivery schedules, allocation terms, manufacturer information, contract terms, contract amendments, contract availability, company policies, and/or target number of units.

97. The method of claim 86, wherein the first information from the product quality databases consists of one or more of the following: product specifications, part numbers, prices, total cost, quality metrics, internal reports, product change requests, warranty information, manufacturer information, manufacturer of equivalent parts, measurement standards, supplier information, suppliers of equivalent parts, availability, class of equivalent parts, class of upgrade parts, class of downgrade parts, standard industry categories, classes of parts that are equivalent to said component for certain specified applications, client inventories, and/or product reviews.

98. The method of claim 86, wherein the first information from the internal parts databases consists of one or more of the following: parts catalogs, part numbers, product specifications, prices, total net landed cost, availability, manufacturer information, manufacturers of equivalent parts, supplier information, suppliers of equivalent parts, class of equivalent parts, class of upgrade parts, class of downgrade parts, classes of parts that are equivalent to said component for certain specified applications, spare parts inventories, supply inventories, supply forecasts, inventory targets, fill rates, just-in-time (JIT) reports, Vendor Managed Inventory (VMI) data, product reviews, supplier ratings, manufacturer ratings, and/or contract terms.

99. The method of claim 86, wherein the first information from the data marts consists of one or more of the following: product specifications, manufacturer information, manufacturers of equivalent components, supplier information, suppliers of equivalent components, upgrades of components, downgrades of components, prices, current sales offers, past sales offers, availability, total net landed cost, EOL information, part numbers, part catalogs, class of equivalent parts, class of upgrade parts, class of downgrade parts, standard industry categories, classes of parts that are equivalent to said component for certain specified applications, news reports, market reports, industry bulletins, daily news broadcasts, emergency broadcasts, trade journals, product reviews, supplier ratings, product launch information, delivery

dates, supplier locations, shipping locations, weather reports, historical weather data, geographical reports, transportation reports, traffic reports, contract prices, sales targets, fill rates, JIT reports, company policies, manufacturer directories, retailer directories, client account information, spare parts inventories, supply inventories, supply forecasts, inventory targets, fill rates, JIT reports, VMI data, product reviews, supplier ratings, manufacturer ratings, contract terms, contract adjustments, and/or customized data based on the integration of first information and second information.

100. The method of claim 86, wherein the first information from the ERP systems consists of one or more of the following: costs, assets, capital equipment data, PO's, demand forecasts, ownership status, purchasing records, stockroom inventories, order processing data, ledgers, product information, manufacturer information, distributor information, retailer information, supply inventories, supply forecast, inventory targets, contract terms, contract prices, sales targets, fill rates, JIT reports, part numbers, supplier ratings, VMI data, stockroom inventories, and/or ERP planning data.

101. The method of claim 86, wherein the first information from the SCM systems consists of one or more of the following: on-hand inventories, order processing, event management, costs, assets, data about transport networks, VMI data, key performance indicators, material flows, inventory control reports, new product launches, new customer segments, facility locations, warehouse locations, suppliers, manufacturers, distributors, forecasts, promotions, product specifications, product life cycles, product obsolescence, product profiles, revenues, sales objectives, supplier selection criteria, sourcing, ordering, invoicing, delivery schedules, bid prices, ask prices, service levels, production schedules, material and constraints capacity, BOMs, manufacturing data, collaboration data, inventory levels, allocation and planning data, confirmation dates, product allocation data, product demand data, due dates, carriers, tariffs, transportation data, shipping routes, handling capacities, shipping schedules, prices, equipment status, delivery logs, event tracking data, weather, purchase history, current units in inventory, inventory logs, current days of supply, demand forecasts, inventory targets, percent deviation from target, location breakdowns, ownership status, and/or SCM planning data.

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102. The method of claim 86, wherein the first information from the MRP systems consists of one or more of the following: PO's, work orders, BOMs, routing and resource data, project structures, asset structures, claims management data, order changes, engineering changes, production schedules, production orders, product and asset life cycles, costs, margins, revenues, status reports, project plans, product specifications, parts, maintenance schedules, product performance data, upgrade data, refurbishment data, backlog data, hazardous materials management information, MSDS datasheets, product safety information, and/or MRP planning data.

103. The method of claim 86, wherein the first information from the CRM systems consists of one or more of the following: profits, billing, contracts, sales activity data, contact management data, customer segmentation data, product and services profiles, marketing plans, POs, order tracking data, order acquisition data, customer address directories, customer preferences, customer site information, vital customer data, customer service management data, field service data, order life cycle process, and/or CRM planning data.

104. The method of 66, wherein the first information consists of messages and/or other types of communication data from e-mails, pagers, voice mail, electronic messaging systems, answering machine messages, telephone calls, web page links, web page data, teleconferencing messages, and/or infrared beamed messages.

105. The method of claim 66, wherein the internal data and the external data are extracted in a plurality of formats requiring transformation.

106. The method of claim 105, wherein the plurality of formats of the external data consists of one or more of the following: XML, Java, flat files, CSV, and/or spreadsheets.

107. The method of claim 105, wherein the plurality of formats of the internal data consists of one or more of the following: XML and/or Java.

108. The method of claim 66, wherein the first information are extracted in a plurality of formats requiring transformation.



109. The method of claim 108, wherein the plurality of formats of the first information consist of one or more of the following: XML, XSL, Java, flat files, CSV, spreadsheets, standard report formats, and/or web-based formats.

110. The method of claim 66, wherein the internal data can be pre-determined  
5 according to a plurality of user-specified inputs.

111. The method of claim 66, wherein the one or more of the software modules automatically incorporate the internal data and the external data and the first information into the next invocation of one or more software modules.

112. The method of claim 111, wherein the first information is the result of system  
10 input.

113. The method of claim 65, wherein the step of invoking one or more software modules includes automatically invoking with partial or complete instantiation, wherein the partial or complete instantiation specifies all or part of the user input for performing a task with a software module.

114. The method of claim 113, wherein the invoking with the partial or complete instantiation are the result of one or more events that the computer system determines merit invocation of the one or more software modules.

115. The method of claim 113, wherein the invoking with the partial or complete instantiation is accompanied by a representation of an alert or plurality of alerts that caused the  
20 module to be invoked.

116. The method of claim 113, wherein the invoking with the partial or complete instantiation is accompanied by a representation of the steps that caused the module to be invoked.

117. The method of claim 66, wherein the step of invoking the one or more software  
25 modules occurs with one or more degrees of instantiation, wherein the one or more degrees of instantiation are customized according to user specifications.

118. The method of claim 66, wherein the step of invoking the one or more software modules occurs with one or more levels of user input.

119. The method of claim 66, wherein the step of triggering automatically the one or more software modules to alert the user is customized by the user to trigger pre-specified messages.

120. The method of claim 66, wherein the step of triggering automatically the one or more software modules to alert the user occurs with one or more levels of user input.

121. The method of claim 66, wherein the step of triggering automatically the one or more software modules to alert the user assists the user in identifying conditions that trigger one or more additional alerts regarding the impact of the first information.

122. The method of claim 121, wherein the conditions that trigger the one or more additional alerts are user-defined.

123. The method of claim 121, wherein the conditions that trigger the one or more additional alerts are executed automatically after the user's approval or after the approval of one or more actions regarding the impact of the first information.

124. The method of claim 66, wherein the first information consists of data about fires, floods, earthquakes, tornados, hurricanes, epidemics, and/or volcano eruptions.

125. The method of claim 66, wherein the first information consists of data about bombings, shootings, power outages, contaminations, and/or labor strikes.

126. The method of claim 66, wherein the step of extracting the first information is conducted in real time.

127. The method of claim 66, wherein the step of loading the first information is conducted in real time.

128. The method of claim 111, wherein the first information is the result of user input.

129. A method using a computer system and a plurality of software modules for assisting users in the procurement of a particular item used in the business activities of an enterprise, the method comprising the step of:

receiving, via one or more software modules, external data, wherein the external data relates to an external event corresponding to the particular item of the enterprise and is received from a source external to the enterprise;

analyzing, via one or more of the software modules, the external data, wherein an analysis is made of a predicted impact of the external event on an expected ability of the enterprise to procure the particular item after the external event;

alerting, via one or more of the software modules, a user of the external event and the predicted impact of the external event on the expected ability of the enterprise to procure the particular item after the external event;

recommending, via one or more of the software modules, one or more proposed actions to the user, wherein the one or more proposed actions correspond to procurement of the particular item and mitigate potential impact of the external event on the enterprise.

130. The method of claim 129, wherein the external event comprises an event affecting a particular geographic area, wherein the step of analyzing includes correlating the particular geographic area with particular products that are manufactured or distributed by particular enterprises operating in the particular geographic area.

131. The method of claim 130, wherein the particular geographic area is firstly correlated with the particular enterprises operating in the particular geographic area, and is secondly correlated with the particular products that are manufactured or distributed by the particular enterprises in the particular geographic area.

132. The method of claim 130, wherein the particular products are correlated to items that are procured by the enterprise.

133. The method of claim 129, wherein the external event comprises an event affecting a particular facility, wherein the step of analyzing includes correlating the particular facility with particular products that are manufactured or distributed using the particular facility.

134. The method of claim 133, wherein the particular facility is correlated with a particular enterprise, wherein the particular enterprise is correlated to particular products that are manufactured or distributed using the particular facility.

135. The method of claim 133, wherein the particular products are correlated to items that are procured by the enterprise.

136. The method of claim 129, wherein the external event comprises an event affecting a particular enterprise, wherein the step of analyzing includes correlating the particular enterprise with particular products that are manufactured or distributed by the particular enterprise.

137. The method of claim 136, wherein the particular products are correlated to items that are procured by the enterprise.

138. The method of claim 129, wherein the external event comprises an event affecting a particular distribution facility or network, wherein the step of analyzing includes correlating the particular distribution facility or network with particular products that are distributed using the particular distribution facility or network.

139. The method of claim 138, wherein the particular distribution facility or network is correlated to a particular enterprise, wherein the particular enterprise is correlated to particular products that are distributed using the particular distribution facility or network.

140. The method of claim 138, wherein the particular products are correlated to items that are procured by the enterprise.

141. The method of claim 129, wherein the external event comprises an event affecting a particular component or material, wherein the step of analyzing includes correlating the particular component or material with particular products that are manufactured using the particular component or material.

142. The method of claim 141, wherein the particular products are correlated to items that are procured by the enterprise.

143. A method using a computer system and a plurality of software modules for assisting users in the procurement of a particular item used in the business activities of an enterprise, the method comprising the step of:

receiving, via one or more software modules, internal data, wherein the internal data relates to an internal event corresponding to the particular item of the enterprise and is received from a source internal to the enterprise;

analyzing, via one or more of the software modules, the external data, wherein an analysis is made of a predicted impact of the external event on an expected ability of the enterprise to procure the particular item after the external event;

alerting, via one or more of the software modules, a user of the external event and the predicted impact of the external event on the expected ability of the enterprise to procure the particular item after the external event;

recommending, via one or more of the software modules, one or more proposed actions to the user, wherein the one or more proposed actions correspond to procurement of the particular item and mitigate potential impact of the external event on the enterprise.

144. The method of claim 143, wherein the internal event comprises an event affecting a particular geographic area, wherein the step of analyzing includes correlating the particular geographic area with particular products that are manufactured or distributed by particular enterprises operating in the particular geographic area.

145. The method of claim 144, wherein the particular geographic area is firstly correlated with the particular enterprises operating in the particular geographic area, and is secondly correlated with the particular products that are manufactured or distributed by the particular enterprises in the particular geographic area.

146. The method of claim 144, wherein the particular products are correlated to items that are procured by the enterprise.

147. The method of claim 143, wherein the internal event comprises an event affecting a particular facility, wherein the step of analyzing includes correlating the particular facility with particular products that are manufactured or distributed using the particular facility.

148. The method of claim 147, wherein the particular facility is correlated with a particular enterprise, wherein the particular enterprise is correlated to particular products that are manufactured or distributed using the particular facility.

149. The method of claim 147, wherein the particular products are correlated to items that are procured by the enterprise.

150. The method of claim 143, wherein the internal event comprises an event affecting a particular enterprise, wherein the step of analyzing includes correlating the particular enterprise with particular products that are manufactured or distributed by the particular enterprise.

151. The method of claim 150, wherein the particular products are correlated to items  
5 that are procured by the enterprise.

152. The method of claim 143, wherein the internal event comprises an event affecting a particular distribution facility or network, wherein the step of analyzing includes correlating the particular distribution facility or network with particular products that are distributed using the particular distribution facility or network.

10 153. The method of claim 152, wherein the particular distribution facility or network is correlated to a particular enterprise, wherein the particular enterprise is correlated to particular products that are distributed using the particular distribution facility or network.

154. The method of claim 152, wherein the particular products are correlated to items  
15 that are procured by the enterprise.

155. The method of claim 143, wherein the internal event comprises an event affecting a particular component or material, wherein the step of analyzing includes correlating the particular component or material with particular products that are manufactured using the particular component or material.

156. The method of claim 155, wherein the particular products are correlated to items  
20 that are procured by the enterprise.